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MORTENSON CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY PROGRAMS: INTERNATIONAL LIBRARIANSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD

[CENTRUM MIĘDZYNARODOWEGO SZKOLENIA BIBLIOTEKARZY
IM. WALTERA I GERDY MORTENSONÓW: MIĘDZYNARODOWE
BIBLIOTEKARSTWO W ZMIENIAJĄCYM SIĘ ŚWIECIE]

Abstract: The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, established in 1991 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has welcomed more than 700 librarians from 89 countries to participate in its educational and professional development programs. The main purpose of various programs and projects developed by the Center is to provide continuing education for librarians, which may assist in overcoming cultural and educational inequalities occurring in developing countries, and fosters international cooperation in the area of library services and library education. The paper will discuss the Center's mission and its changing focus, the most distinguished programs and projects, LIS mini-courses especially geared towards Mortenson associates, and the Mortenson Center cooperation with other foundations in the area of funding the Center's programs. The Center's activities and management will be examined as possible models for a successful international cooperation between library educators and professionals.

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARIANSHIP – LIBRARIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – LIBRARY AND INFORMATION
SCIENCE EDUCATION – MORTENSON CENTER – USA

Abstrakt: Z oferty edukacyjnej The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, które zostało założone w 1991 roku na University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, skorzystało do tej pory ponad 700 bibliotekarzy z 89 krajów. Głównym celem różnych programów i projektów realizowanych przez tę instytucję było rozwijanie edukacji permanentnej dla bibliotekarzy, która mogłaby pomagać w przełamywaniu kulturalnych i edukacyjnych nierówności w krajach rozwijających się oraz wspierać rozwój międzynarodowej współpracy w obszarze usług bibliotecznych i edukacji bibliotekarskiej. Przedstawiono misję Centrum i jego zmieniający się główny obszar zaintereso-

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wań, najważniejsze programy i projekty, mini-kursy z zakresu informacji naukowej i bibliotekoznawstwa zaprojektowane specjalnie dla *członków Centrum* oraz współpracę w zakresie finansowania programów oferowanych przez Centrum. Działania Centrum i sposób zarządzania zostały przeanalizowane pod kątem możliwości ich wykorzystania jako skutecznych i sprawdzonych modeli realizowania współpracy międzynarodowej między edukatorami z zakresu bibliotekarstwa i profesjonalistami.

BIBLIOTEKARSTWO MIĘDZYNARODOWE – BIBLIOTEKI W KRAJACH ROZWIJAJĄCYCH SIĘ – BIBLIOTEKOZNAWSTWO I INFORMACJA NAUKOWA – EDUKACJA – MORTENSON CENTER – USA

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Mission and Strategies of the Mortenson Center

The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library was established in 1991 with a focus on programs for the promotion of international education, understanding and peace to strengthened international ties among libraries and librarians, regardless of geographic location or access to technology. The Center provides continuing education for librarians and information specialists from all over the world and to date has welcomed more than 700 librarians from 89 countries to participate in its educational and professional development programs. The main purpose of the various programs and projects developed by the Center is to provide continuing education for librarians which assists in overcoming cultural and educational inequalities occurring in countries and fosters international cooperation in the area of library service and library education. Marianna Tax Choldin, the Center's former director, observed during her international trips that despite cultural differences most libraries had three things in common, namely reference collections looked alike in most libraries, some collections were organized to prevent, rather than provide, easy access, and paper smelled the same everywhere.

The Mortenson Center offers unique non-degree programs for librarians and information science professionals from outside the United States. These programs provide visitors – known as Mortenson Associates – with a broad knowledge of, and exposure to, the theory and practice of librarianship in U.S. and provides ample opportunities to exchange information about practices in a wide variety of countries. An open enrollment program is held for eight weeks each year and participants from a variety of countries study together. The extended visits allow visitors to gain a deep understanding of connection between goals of the profession and the provision of services to library users. The main components of the Associates program are:

Seminar series where Associates participate in a variety of seminars that provide an overview of current trends in the field, including such topics as fund-raising and development, advocacy, library services, library networks, preservation and conservation, library administration, professional associations, and services to the disabled.

Mortenson Associates participate in practical sessions that help them learn to use the latest technologies applicable to libraries.

Tours of a variety of libraries including academic, public, school and special provide opportunities to observe best practice and talk with a range of librarians. A visit to Chicago includes a tour of the American Library Association headquarters and other libraries and organizations like the Center for Research Libraries. Groups

also visit the Illinois State Library, one of our partners, and they provide interesting and timely programming for Mortenson Associates in the state capitol.

National and state conferences and meetings of major professional associations represent an important source of information and personal contacts for Associates. When funding is available arrangements are made for Associates to participate in these kinds of events. Associates generally attend and make a presentation at the Illinois Library Association conference.

Individual consultations with local librarians are arranged for Associates based on their particular interests. The meetings may take the form of tours of specific library units, one-on-one meetings with library professionals, or ongoing discussions involving substantive professional questions.

Associates receive a University of Illinois identification card granting them full access to the holdings and services of the University Library. In addition, Associates are able to use the computer lab facilities on campus and attend lectures and seminars presented to the general public.

When possible, Associates participate in presentations and workshops offered for library faculty and staff. A regional library network offers many workshops for librarians from all over the state. Mortenson Associates are encouraged to participate in appropriate sessions.

Upon successful completion of the program, Associates receive a certificate of program participation. The Associates program is a non-degree program intended to provide professional development opportunities for individuals working in library and information center settings.

Specialized programs are also offered for groups when requested. Examples of past Mortenson Center projects include visits by art librarians from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from 1993 to 1996, "Russia Small Town Project" from 2001 to 2002, "University Librarian Training Education: Education Innovation Project" in May 2003, and "Library and Information Science Education and Library Development in Georgia" in November 2004. Each program had a separate set of objectives and was designed for different groups of library professionals and administrators. For example, visits by art librarians included participants from academic, research, art, and museum libraries from Central and Eastern Europe. The "Russia Small Towns" Project was designed to help Russian small-town libraries become vibrant information centers for their communities, and involved visits to the United States by ten public library directors from Russia, and visits to Russia by ten American librarians. It is interesting to note that projects are often funded by different organizations. The "Russia Small Towns" Project was funded by multiple awards from Open Society Institute-Russia and the Illinois State Library, and the "Library and Information Science Education and Library Development in Georgia" Project was sponsored by the United States Embassy. Examples of recent programs include a two week program in Russian for librarians and information technologists from universities in Siberia sponsored by the World Bank and visits of several days by groups sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Staff from learning resource centers from Vietnam have recently spent eight weeks at the Mortenson Center to learn more about library services and programs. This program was sponsored by Atlantic Philanthropies. Mortenson Center staff also offer programs in other countries with partners when that is the best approach.

Partnerships and the Mortenson Center

The Mortenson Center prefers to work in partnership with libraries, associations, foundations or other groups to make long term sustainability of continuing education activities and resulting projects more likely. Assisting in the development of self-sustaining centers for continuing education around the world with our partners Center staff identify professional development needs, develop appropriate educational programs, and help find resources to sustain these programs. Librarians from partner countries or regions are often trained through the Associates programs.

The University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign Library (UIUC), Illinois State Library (ISL), Lincoln Trail Libraries System and other libraries in Illinois are important partners to the Mortenson Center. Librarians at UIUC teach many of the courses for Mortenson Associates. Several faculty members from the UIUC Graduate School of Library and Information Science also offer specialized brief courses for Mortenson Associates. The ISL arranges visits to libraries around the state where Associates stay individually for several days to work with local library staff. This program has been very well received by Mortenson Associates who get individual attention and time to ask questions and by Illinois librarians who have learned a great deal from interacting with international colleagues. No library can accomplish its programs on its own and the Mortenson Center depends on a number of libraries in its continuing education work for international librarians.

Currently the Mortenson Center has a National Leadership Grant with the Illinois State Library from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services to develop an international library leadership institute focused on negotiations, empowerment, fund-raising, and advocacy issues. The project brings together mid career librarians from the U.S. with librarians from other countries to address issues of concern such as preservation and technology to improve and enhance their skills and ability to work with colleagues from other countries and cultures in addressing common challenges. At the end of the project a leadership institute kit will be available for others to use.

Funding to participate in Center programs is often a big challenge. Partnerships can be helpful in addressing this issue. Two Center projects including work in Central America with the University of Costa Rica and projects with the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) were funded by the Mellon Foundation. LIASA has now received funding from the Carnegie Corporation to do its own continuing education programs. The Japan Association of Private University Libraries and the Japan Association of National University Libraries each cover expenses for one librarian in one of their member libraries to participate in the Mortenson Associates program. The Luis Angel Arango Library in Colombia sends 3–5 librarians each year to the Center and has been doing this for six years. They now have a cadre of librarians who are able to share what they have learned and continue to improve the excellent public libraries. In Haiti FOKAL funded by the Open Society Institute has established about 40 community libraries and several librarians have come to the Mortenson Center for a train the trainer program and now offer continuing education for their colleagues throughout Haiti. In the early days the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature was a very important partner of the Mortenson Center and the two organizations worked together to offer continuing education programs and draw attention to issues like freedom of access to information and free expression in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Funding from the Open Society Institute supported these programs.

Today much of the work of the Mortenson Center is focused on sub-Sahara Africa and is supported by the Carnegie Corporation and MacArthur Foundation. Ten university libraries in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and

Uganda have been selected by the foundations to work with the Mortenson Center on this project. The objective is to provide users of university libraries with better access to research and information materials including moving into a fully automated online catalog environment and a computer-based library management system to contribute to the development of robust research universities. Sixteen librarians from these universities spent eight weeks at the Mortenson Center and teams from the Center have made a number of visits to the countries to present specialized training programs.

Future Partnerships and Cooperation

As library users and the services they need and expect continue to change, approaches to partnership and collaboration may change and evolve. At the Mortenson Center we know that librarians need to continue to develop ways to learn from one another and enhance the programs our libraries provide and the skills librarians have to plan and develop new services for a changing world. Learning from librarians in other countries expands perspectives and provides opportunities to learn new approaches and skills. The Mortenson Center Associates programs with librarians from a number of countries studying together in a specialized non-degree program offers one model for international cooperation between library educators and library professionals from various countries.

The Mortenson Center is always looking for new partners and additional ways to collaborate and foster collaboration with and among other library organizations. At the Mortenson Center web site [<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/mortenson/>] you can learn more about Center projects and collaboration.

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